

Revamping of Angkorwat, an ancient temple in Cambodia

755. SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI: Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government are aware about the revamping and poor conditions of Indian Culture Angkorwat an ancient temple in Cambodia;
- (b) if so, whether Cambodian Government has approached the Central Government for repairing/developing of the temple;
- (c) if so, the details thereof and the foreign exchange expected to be incurred thereon; and
- (d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) The Archaeological Survey of India has carried out conservation of certain portions of Angkorwat in temple in Cambodia during the years 1986 to 1993. Subsequently, agencies from other countries were also associated with the scientific studies and conservation of Angkorwat.

(b) to (d) Cambodian Government has requested India's co-operation in Conservation and Restoration of Ta Prohm temple. Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India has entrusted this project to Archaeological Survey of India with an estimated cost of Rs. 19.57 crores to be executed in ten years. The work on this project has commenced from January, 2004. Archaeological Survey of India had completed documentation of the temple and carried out detailed scientific investigations. The restoration works are in progress.

Ancient bridge between India and Sri Lanka

756. SHRI PYARELAL KHANDELWAL: Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government are aware that the Archaeological Studies reveal that the age of Ram Sethu Bridge between India and Sri Lanka is about 17 lakh years old;
- (b) whether it is a fact that NASA has released the images of an ancient bridge at the same place as mentioned above; and
- (c) if so, what are the reasons for not declaring and preserving the said bridge as an ancient monument of National and Historical importance?

THE MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) There are no archaeological studies revealing the existence of a Ram Sethu Bridge between India and Sri Lanka.

(b) A NASA satellite picture shows the existence of a stretch of land bridge in the Palk Strait between India and Sri Lanka.

(c) Question does not arise.

Maintenance of buildings/temples in Rajasthan

†757. SHRI LALIT KISHORE CHATURVEDI: Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that in the absence of maintenance of buildings and temples built in Ninth and Tenth century in Rajasthan, they are turning into ruins;

(b) the heritage of the country is being destroyed by smuggling of this ancient property on large scale in absence of maintenance; and

(c) by when the arrangement will be made to prevent the destruction of the ancient property of the State?

THE MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) The Centrally protected monuments including buildings/temples of ninth and tenth century AD located in different parts of the State of Rajasthan are in good state of preservation.

(b) and (c) The 3667 notified centrally protected monuments located in different parts of the country under the control of the Archaeological Survey of India, receive adequate attention both in terms of day-do-day maintenance and structural repairs as per archaeological principles. Regular watch and ward staff are provided in these monuments/sites and their strength is augmented in selected monuments by deploying private security guards, state police and para military forces as part of security measure. Legal provisions exist in the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological sites and Remains Act, 1958 and rules made thereunder to prevent any misuse or destruction of the ancient monuments under the control of the Archaeological Survey of India.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.